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Leaving Kandahar is a Bittersweet Feeling

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An ambulance rolling out at the NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

By U.S. Navy Capt. Mike McCarten, former commanding officer of the NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit, Kandahar, Afghanistan. McCarten is a family physician and aerospace medicine specialist.

The old saying that war is hell is true, and those of us at the NATO Role 3 Hospital in Kandahar needed no convincing of that. Our job was to deal with the tragic fallout of war; mangled bodies, amputated limbs, death that came too soon, and too often the destruction of Afghan childhoods. And while our mission was always inside the wire, I honor the warriors who

patrol outside the wire daily. Their courage is humbling.

My year of command has come to an end and it's time to return home. It's been a long year and I am anxious to return to my life and my family but I am also envious of my relief, Capt. Bruce Meneley, as he and his crew begin their mission at the Role 3. They will learn, as I did, that the Role 3 is unique in Navy Medicine as its mission is relevant in a tactical theater of war. Its focus and impact on the lives of the troops and local nationals who are treated there is something we don't fully appreciate, but we know that many have a chance at life they may not have otherwise received.



U.S. Navy Corpsmen at the NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit in Kandahar, Afghanistan carry a patient to the Hospital.

I will always be grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit and to work with such an exceptional crew.

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The NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit Staff in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on Memorial Day 2011.

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Jeffrey Pizarro

Fair winds and clear skies to you CAPT McCarten! Another feather in your cap sir!

Spector, Stephen

The honor was ours to serve with you sir. I was proud to call you might CO. Hope to do it again one day.

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